

**MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON  
ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS**

**Meeting Minutes**

Date: Tuesday, September 16, 2008

Time: 6:30 pm – 9:00 pm

Place: Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation  
1100 Mercantile Lane, Suite 115-A  
Largo, Maryland

Present: Chair Jane Nishida, Anis Ahmed, Shukoor Ahmed, Katherine Chin, Kwang Choi, Elizabeth Chung, George Dang, Dr. Suresh Gupta, Maria Hrabinski, Tammy Pantages, Shailesh Patel, Dr. Amjad Riar, Dr. Nayan Shah, Dr. Sovan Tun, Beth Wong

Absent: Vice Chair Bruce Lee, Dr. Kamala Edwards, Dr. Martin Ma, David Pak, Lily Qi, Kui Zhao

Staff Present: David Lee, Agnes M. Smith

Guest Speakers: Delegate Kris Valderrama  
Secretary of State John McDonough  
Pat Hayes-Parker, Vice President of International Business & Administration, Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation  
Cathleen Hamel, Office of International Trade & Investment, Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development

**I. Welcome and Guest Speakers**

Chair Jane Nishida opened the meeting and thanked our host Ms. Pat Hayes-Parker. This is the first opportunity to meet in Prince George's County to hear the concerns of Prince George's County residents with regards to what the Asian American Commission can do in terms of advancing issues that are of concern to them. There were brief introductions from Commission Members and members of the public.

**II. Guest Speakers**

**John McDonough, Secretary of State**

Secretary of State John McDonough spoke about his relationship with Jane Nishida in a previous administration. Secretary McDonough gave an overview of what the Office of the Secretary of State does that affects the work of the Commission, since the Commission has direct outreach to the constituent communities within the State of Maryland. Many of the communities are concerned about international relations since they have roots in foreign countries. Many of the Commission's constituencies are involved in international businesses as well. The Secretary of State functions in those areas in two ways:

1. The Office of the Secretary of State administers the Sister State Program for the State and assists local jurisdictions with their Sister City/Sister County relationships. This is done in conjunction with a non-profit in the City of Annapolis;
2. The Secretary of State chairs the Subcabinet on International Affairs, which includes the Lt. Governor and other cabinet secretaries whose departments have some relationship with international matters. The Subcabinet was created to coordinate between agencies and be a one stop shop.

The Secretary is trying to raise money to supplement the international aspects of the Office of the Secretary of State. They are also seeking an advisory committee who will advise on and assist in the expansion of the International Affairs Division. He asked for the Commission's help with membership to the committee, so that all communities in the State will be represented, including businesses that are already currently active in international trade. The goal is to raise several hundred thousand dollars. The Sister State Program is made up largely of volunteers. Secretary McDonough said that by raising money through the non-profit to expand the program and to facilitate more relationships, it will help expand the program without draining other services in Maryland. That is the main priority for the International Office, to grow it through the non-profit so as to free it from the strain of public funding.

Chair Nishida asked Secretary of State McDonough to describe the Sister State programs with Asian countries, what type of activities they have been involved with, and where Asian American communities in Maryland might be engaged.

Mendy Nitsch, International Program Director at the Office of the Secretary of State, informed the Commission that Maryland has three Asian Sister States. Anhui Province, China, is the oldest Sister State, formed in 1980; Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan, formed in 1981; and Gyeongsangnam Province, South Korea, in the early 1990s. All of the committees are made up of citizen volunteers and the activities that the committees take on are really the decision of the committees and the committee chair. There is regular communication with the counterparts in the other countries to make sure that what is being planned matches their needs and interests. Anhui, China has a strong higher education program. Japan has two English teacher exchanges, several student exchanges and a lacrosse exchange that began almost twenty years ago. South Korea has education programs and business programs. There will be one hundred fifty high school sophomores visiting St. Mary's county at the end of September from an international foreign language school in the Korean Sister State. The Japan program also has a women's committee. The Kanagawa office also has a trade office in Annapolis.

Commissioner Kitty Chin informed the Commission that she is a member of the Baltimore-Xiamen Sister City Committee. A group just came back yesterday from Xiamen. They are trying to partner with them concerning education and culture. There are a lot of students from Johns Hopkins University who are members of the Sister City program. There are now numerous members of Chinese descent on the committee.

A question was asked as to the criteria required to be a part of the Sister State program. Ms. Nitsch said that one of the key criteria is staffing, in order to manage all of the programs appropriately. Another key factor is having a strong enough constituent base that can maintain a relationship, since volunteers are relied upon so heavily. There have to be some significant ties to that region to maintain a relationship. Another criteria is understanding what the similarities are and having a idea or plan for programs and projects and how they will be carried out. Some of the similarities include geography, industry, education, etc. Secretary of State McDonough

informed the Commission that the criteria are informal, not in writing. He is having Ms. Nitsch develop the criteria for the Sister State Advisory Committee to adopt at the next meeting.

Commissioner Beth Wong spoke about Prince George's County having a Sister County relationship with China about three years ago which no longer exists. This community is very interested in promoting international trade in this county. She wanted to know if the State had any kind of resources for assistance. Ms. Nitsch informed the Commission that within the Secretary of State's Office, the International Division and the Maryland Sister States Program officially only administers the ten existing Sister State programs. However, they do collaborate a lot with local jurisdictions. She has regular communication with Sister City/Sister County representatives, volunteers, government staff, etc. They promote each others' work and have initiated a Maryland international consortium so that all these different people can meet on a regular basis and have an idea on what is going on around the State.

### **Delegate Kris Valderrama**

Delegate Kris Valderrama said it was an honor to be at this Commission meeting. She said she came mainly to listen but would be available to the Commission. She represents Prince Georges County and is the only Asian delegate from that county. It was also noted that former Delegate David Valderrama, who is Delegate Kris Valderrama's father, sponsored the legislation that created the Governor's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs.

### **Patricia Hayes-Parker, Vice President of International Business & Administration, Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation**

Ms. Patricia Hayes-Parker spoke to the Commission about opportunities for business in Prince George's County through the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation. Prince George's County is unique in its physical proximity to Washington DC. It is an ideal location because of its proximity to about 1/3 of the consumer and industrial market in the United States, meaning overnight delivery and direct flights, and is serviced by three major airports. The region is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest retail market and the 4<sup>th</sup> largest population center in the United States. It has proximity to the U.S. federal government, which is important for those businesses interested in partnering with U.S. companies, with about 1/3 of all federal spending done in the region. There are usually over \$8 billion in federal obligations each year. There are over 15,000 businesses employing over 230,000 workers in the county. Many IT firms, large multi-national and small venture funded start ups are a part of the incubator facilities. They have access to the university brain pool and student interns for R&D.

The International Business Program at the EDC is the administrator of Foreign Trade Zone 63. They have an incubator agreement with the Maryland India Business Roundtable. Sister port agreements with Gambia and Ghana have been negotiated with the assistance of the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development. Each year, an International Economic Summit is presented. In the first year, 2006, the focus was on Asia and the Pacific basin. There was an Indian delegation comprised of about ten companies which struck a couple of trade deals as a result of that summit. Delegate David Valderrama was instrumental in coming up with the idea to have this international economic summit.

Ms. Hayes-Parker informed the Commission that they assist many companies and have closed about \$48 million in trade deals on the Continent of Africa, a couple million dollars in India and about \$10 million in a Chinese deal. They work with University of Maryland University College and its graduate school each year in their MBA strategy projects where they choose several

Maryland companies and develop international strategies for them. Memorandums of Understanding have been developed with Zhenjiang, Brazil, the Congo, Shandong and the state of Haryana, India. They meet on an on-going basis with members of the international community and have an International Business Strategy Advisory Council that has an Asian working group. Many foreign delegations are hosted yearly.

They have a concept for an international office and warehouse incubator. They are doing a feasibility study which will be completed in February. This incubator will be located at Steeple Chase 95 International Business Park. In the Foreign Trade Zone, they look for companies that are interested in assembling, exhibiting, repacking, and processing material. There is over \$2 billion in value added to merchandise received at Foreign Trade Zones annually. There are four Foreign Trade Zones in Maryland: Prince George's, BWI, Port of Baltimore and Washington County. Ms. Hayes-Parker told the Commission that the International Economic Summit will be focusing on Asia next year. She would like to stay in contact with them and wants them to be active in this initiative.

A question was asked about community development. Ms. Hayes-Parker answered that the Foreign Trade Zone has a benefit besides just economic benefits – developments like the FTZ provide benefit to the community through infrastructure development; new roads, retail around the zone, and opportunity for jobs.

A question was asked about medicines in relation to Foreign Trade Zones. Ms. Hayes-Parker said that pharmaceutical companies are located in the Foreign Trade Zone. Most of the time, part of the chemicals are brought in from outside the U.S.

There was a question about the length of time a company stays in Maryland. Ms. Hayes-Parker informed the Commission that the length of time depends on whether the company is leasing space or buying.

A question was asked about whether these companies in the Foreign Trade Zones hire local employees or bring employees with them. Ms. Hayes-Parker said that when companies settle down they hire workers throughout the metropolitan area. They may bring management with them.

Commissioner Sovan Tun asked about the emphasis being put on the Continent of Africa. Ms. Hayes-Parker said that they just received a grant, thanks to the efforts of Senator Benjamin Cardin, to establish an African Trade Office. But they are working on trade deals all over the world, in the Caribbean, India, China, Africa, etc.

### **Cathleen Hamel, Office of International Trade & Investment, Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development**

Ms. Cathleen Hamel is the regional manager for Taiwan, Japan and South Korea at DBED. Four of DBED's six foreign offices are in Asia. DBED's mission is to attract new businesses, stimulate private investment and create jobs, encourage the expansion and retention of existing companies and provide workforce training and financial assistance. The Division of International Investment and Trade has three goals: 1) increase Foreign Direct Investment into Maryland (attracting new businesses); 2) increase export volumes of Maryland small and medium size enterprises (help Maryland companies expand their existing businesses); and 3) market Maryland as the premier "Global Gateway" to America (elevate Maryland's international stature). There are six offices, with four located in Asia: Shanghai, Seoul, Taipei and Singapore.

They offer twenty Export MD grants to small or medium size companies in Maryland. This is a \$5,000 matching grant to help defer export expenses. DBED also offers twenty free hours of assistance in their foreign offices. Maryland is poised for industries of the future like telecommunications, biotechnology, etc. The Governor just announced the Bio 2020 initiative, which will invest over \$1 billion into Maryland's biotech industry over the next ten years. Foreign Direct Investment is a key component to the U.S. and Maryland economy. In Maryland about 15,000 jobs come from Asia and 100,000 jobs come from foreign companies.

The office in Shanghai is the longest running and largest operation of any U.S. state in China, and last year it generated over \$30 million in export sales from Maryland companies. The office in Taipei has 3 staff, and last year assisted about 20 Maryland companies. The office in Seoul just opened, and next month there will be an investment mission to Bio Korea. Also, there will be a delegation of Korean biotechnology companies coming in November. The Singapore office has 1 staff and assisted 8 Maryland companies in exporting last year.

Ms. Hamel informed the Commission that DBED wants to engage the private sector. They are looking to launch an International Advisory Council comprised of members of the private sector who have some international business experience.

Chair Nishida asked whether DBED maintained a list of Asian foreign businesses. Ms. Hamel informed the Commission that a list of foreign businesses is kept but not separated by country. Chair Nishida said that the Business Development subcommittee could help out in this area since it will be trying to promote Asian businesses.

#### **Angela Lagdameo, Special Assistant to Chief of Staff, Governor's Office of Community Initiatives**

Ms. Angela Lagdameo informed the Commission that she is working on a variety of projects that involve intergovernmental affairs as well as issues affect the ethnic commissions and minority communities. She spoke about a new study put out by the Casey Foundation on the Impact of Immigrants and Their Families in Maryland the Contributions of Immigrant Workers to the Economy. Ms. Lagdameo spoke about Maryland's immigrant population being highly educated. A high percentage has a college degree or higher. The key recommendation that is coming out of this is the need to invest in education and training to bridge the literacy and language divide for immigrants and native born workers to help Maryland remain competitive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Ms. Lagdameo spoke about Maryland having over 735,000 individuals (14.5%) speaking another language. Because over 150 languages are spoken in schools by thousands of students, Senator James Rosapepe sponsored Senate Bill 506 to create a Task Force to Study the Preservation of Heritage Languages. This task force will be making recommendations to the Governor by January 2009. They want to ensure that heritage language skills are preserved, and identify measures for success. The task force will conduct community outreach, consult with educators, compile data on the number of actual and potential heritage language speakers, collect data on education and culture, study methods of advancing and preserving heritage language skills, and consider new cost effective and innovative ways to encourage and facilitate heritage language preservation while encouraging new citizens to master English.

There was a question as to whether the task force is working with the Department of Education. Ms. Lagdameo said that there are representatives from higher education, the Department of Education and representatives from community colleges.

### **III. Public Participation**

#### **Dorothy Wilson, Partnership Specialist, United State Census Bureau**

As a partnership specialist, she does outreach to communities that need to be counted. Her area of responsibility is Prince George's, Calvert, Charles, Dorchester, St. Mary's, Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset. They are reaching out to the community to let them know that Census 2010 will be out in February/March 2010. She wants to spread the word that there will be a short form this year which will be easy, safe and confidential. They need everybody to send that form back in so that the \$300 billion in assistance from the federal government can be appropriately distributed to neighborhoods and communities. We need to know where the people are in order to correctly distribute money for roads, bridges, highways, clinics, recreational centers, etc. Census numbers are also used for redistricting. Ms. Wilson asked for the help of the Commission in order to reach the communities. Her contact information: 267-650-5873 (cell)/301-341-1489 (landline).

Chair Nishida noted that one of the items on the Commission's work plan is promotion and outreach in regards to the Census. The Community Development committee has already listed this as an action item.

There was a question about whether the Census analyzes this data based on heritage, ethnicity and location of senior citizens. Ms. Wilson informed the Commission that they can visit the Census website at: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) which will lead you to all of the information that you need to know. She also gave the main number to the Philadelphia regional office: 215-717-7600. The Information Services Office does an analysis of all information gathered.

#### **Allison Lord, Vice President, Asian American Anti-Smoking Foundation**

Ms. Lau solicited the help of the Commission to reach out to the communities about the Tobacco Prevention Program and the Colon Cancer Prevention Program. She has been doing outreach since 2000 and has become very close to the Asian American population, and realizes the community has problems like gambling and alcoholism. She wants the Commission's help to get the Governor's attention for more prevention programs to address these problems.

#### **Dr. Sherman Yen, Asian American Anti-Smoking Foundation**

Dr. Sherman Yen spoke about a proposed visit to Taiwan in September 2009. The purpose of the proposed visit is to explore the possibilities of establishing more trade opportunities, information exchanges in the areas with learning, institutes, health services and environmental related issues.

### **IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

There was a motion to approve minutes for March, May and July meetings by Commission Anis Ahmed. Seconded. Minutes approved.

### **V. Committee Reports**

#### **Anis Ahmed, Community Development**

The Committee would like to invite the media to a Commission meeting. Asked Commissioners to make a list of the media that is important to your community and send to him or David Lee so that invitations can be sent. Chair Nishida suggested that Commission get identification of media within the various communities and we'll see what the appropriate venue is to meet with them.

Commissioner Maria Hrabinski suggested that for maximum impact we get something on the Governor's schedule in order to draw the media.

### **Sovan Tun – Social Services**

The Committee will have a conference call on the first Wednesday of the each month.

### **Senior Executive Director David Lee – Economic Development**

The Economic Development Committee has begun planning for the Asian American Business Conference. The next meeting will be on Monday. Business leaders from the Rockville area attended, but they are trying to expand to a larger part of the region. They would like to include Prince George's, Howard and Anne Arundel. A greater portion of the Asian American business community can participate in this conference. The suggested theme is: "Access to Opportunities". They are trying to open up doors for procurement and contracting opportunities both within the State government, federal government, local government and the private sector. There are a number of large companies in Maryland that have sub-contracting and procurement opportunities. The tentative date is the beginning of May 2009 to coincide with Asian Pacific American Heritage Month.

Commissioner Suresh Gupta asked what programs are available for senior citizens in Asian communities. Chair Nishida responded that the November meeting will be focusing on health issues and social services. It is time to switch the focus and look at some of the social services and community services that should be promoted to the Asian American communities. In November the meeting will be held in Montgomery County and asked that Commissioner Gupta work with the Social Services Committee and identify what groups should make presentations at the meeting. Commissioner Gupta suggested that the Department of Aging would be good to bring information as to what kinds of services are available to senior citizens. Commissioner Elizabeth Chung suggested that the focus stay on one area.

Chair Nishida said that the Commission needs to go back to the work plan developed earlier this year. Commissioners are asked to look at the priority areas that were identified and see what goals can be delivered. The 2008 Annual Report has to be able to deliver on some of the short term goals. At the next meeting, instead of committee reports, committees will give a status of where we are in terms of short term work goals.

## **VI. New Business**

There will be an annual meeting of all of the ethnic commissions in December before the holidays. It will be ½ day, 1:00 p.m. – evening. At this meeting there will be yearly assessments and strategic plans for the following years. In the late afternoon, all the Commissions will get together and share respective work plans, what was accomplished in the past year and what is planned for the following year. Hopefully, the Governor and Lt. Governor will be in attendance. That will be followed with a dinner and networking opportunity among all the Commissions so that common issues can be collaborated upon.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:09 p.m.